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Connecticut State Medical Society Testimony
House Bill 5452 An Act Concerning the Provision of Volunteer Health Care Services on A
Temporary Basis
Public Health Committee
March 12, 2010

Senator Harris, Representative Ritter and members of the Public Health Committee, my name is Dr. Steven Wolfson. I am a practicing cardiologist in New Haven and a member of the Connecticut State Medical Society (CSMS) Council. On behalf of our more than 7,000 members thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony to you today in support of House Bill 5452 An Act Concerning the Provision of Volunteer Health Care Services on a Temporary Basis. We fully believe that this legislation is necessary to leverage access for indigent residents of this state pro bono medical services.

In short, we are asking for help so that we can give our services away!

The language before you today establishes a process in which the Commissioner of the Department of Public Health (DPH) may temporarily suspend licensure, certification and registration requirements for health care professionals who provide pro bono services associated with free medical clinics, charitable medical events, the Special Olympics or similar athletic competitions. This would allow out of state physicians to come to Connecticut to provide services, free of charge, for a limited period of time. We fully support the intent of this legislation and also provide recommendations to strengthen the bill.

As an example of the power of volunteer services, on February 3, 2010, Connecticut became the fourth location to host an all day free clinic by the National Association of Free Clinics. In one day 998 Connecticut residents without health insurance received pro bono care from many health care providers. Ironically, several physicians who traveled from out of state to participate were informed upon arrival that Connecticut law prevented them from providing service. The proposed law would have allowed clinic organizers to seek approval for these physicians to provide services for the day.

Although we do believe that certain sections of the bill should be amended to allow for ample application and approval time for appropriate events, we strongly encourage support of this legislation.

Additionally, we believe that this proposed legislation can lead us toward the concept, expanding on efforts of past sessions, to tap into existing resources within Connecticut. We urge you to consider the incentive of a reduced or waived license fee for retired physicians who wish to volunteer their services. In 2007 CSMS established a Senior Section Committee. This committee has developed pillars for involvement by senior physicians in Connecticut. One pillar guiding this committee is the delivery of care to the indigent. It is strongly believed that senior

physicians can assist in the care of the indigent population either as generalists or within their specialties.

In past years this General assembly has passed legislation allowing for a license fee waiver for any retired physician who delivers a minimum of 100 hours of uncompensated care throughout the year. The settings are limited to at a public health facility, as defined in section 20-126I, or in connection with a mobile health clinic that provides health care services to individuals of this state. We respectfully ask that members of this committee work with CSMS to review the requirements of Public Act 08-31 to appropriately adjust the hourly threshold and acceptable settings for the delivery of pro bono care.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this testimony to you today. We respectfully ask for your support of House Bill 5452.